The Devil's Advocate

While Baker's posing of overly-limited questions as a mean of estaimating Nixon's personal involvement in these "White House horrors," Mitchell's ~~fx~~ apt description, served to rule out more basic questions, they are good questions to ask ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ in connection with the Hunt bribery: what did he know, when did he know it and what did he do about it?

When he knew has a ~~xx~~ an answer separate from the evidence because Nixon was able to control what became known and to suppress what it served his interest to suppress. There can be no doubt that he knew everything immediately. This is the way government's work. Not only that, but nobody dared act in his name on what could ruin him and condemn him in perpetuity without his knowledge and assent. More reprehensible crimes,-more subversive crimes-were committed to hide his involvement and that of so many of his closest advisers and personal staff. If all of those Hugh Sidey described as "his squalid crew of fanatics"(Times 8/5/74) who ~~amounted~~ "this monstrous assault upon the Constitution" - Sidey's words again - (Times 8/5/74) were more insane and more irresponsible than their incredible record shows them to be they still would not have dared ~~xxxxxxxx~~ pile more serious crimes atop the despicable one detected without his knowledge. Least of all would they have bribed, using his money illegally for that new illegality, without his approval if not at his initial direction. When he knew has to be immediately. But because he claims it was not until March 21,1973, here we examine his own record on that, as we do what he knew and what he did about it.

Nixon made this record on his own also illegal clandestine bugging and tapping. When he released his own version of his own selection of these tapes he made the first record available. It was soon established that his was not an honest record because it was incomplete, the most important tapes allegedly not existing at all.~~and~~ Some were deliberately destroyed, as was established in Judge Sirica's court ~~xxx~~ by a panel of experts ~~xx~~ on whom Nixon and the special prosecutor both agreed. Once the House Judiciary Committee obtained

Note: all newspaper 1/19/74 ff

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This line began with Counsel Fred Buzhardt's hysterical reaction to John Dean's testimony, in statements Buzhardt supplied to the Senate Watergate committee and in questions he asked it to ask of Dean. It wam continued by Ehrlichman and Haldeman in their testimony before that committee.

dubs or copies of the tapes and made its own transcripts it was established that Nixon's were not honest. Incriminating passages were eliminated and altered.

The official explanation of this corruption of evidence is that Nixon was playing "devil's advocate," an absurd falsehood adopted from one of Nixon's self-serving declarations. It is claimed for him that all his disclosures on the transcipts of those of the tapes not still suppressed were not admissions but some special kind of Nixonian questioning calculated to extract truth from unwilling assistants. Only a White House as desparate as this one and only a staff of ~~pax~~ Nixon-gathered sociopaths would not rebel at this self-demeaning.

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What was forgotten is that Nixon knew he was bugging himself and those with whom he conferred. He knew and Haldeman knew. None of the others did. Therefore, Nixon and Haldeman had an advantage too great to measure. They could entrap others. They could contrive false records of what they knew and did not know and what they did and did not do. They could and did feign ignorance of what was well known to them. They could construct a defense for themselves.

But even t is is not enough to ~~xxxxxxxx~~ exculpate Nixon.

It was claimed for him that the totality of the transcripts establish his innocence. The opposite is true but were it not there can be no exonneration in a manufactured record. The tapes Nixon knew were being made cannot be used to acquit him. But they can be used to convict him.

They do.

They also convict him of the dishonesty because he went over all the corrupting of his own tapes and according to his own spokesman did the editing.

After the real words he spoke were leaked ~~xxxxx~~ from the House Judiciary Committee the White House had to react and it did. Ron Ziegler, whom Nixon had drawn closer to himself when he had to let Haldeman and Ehrlichman go, was his spokesman. The White House makes quite a production of its transcripts of these news conferences. That in which Ziegler was asked about the distortions in the Nixon versions of Nixon's tapes is headed,

7 "AT THE WHITE HOUSE WITH RON ZIEGLER AT 12:09 P.M. EDT July 10, 1974 WEDNESDAY."

In answer to a question Ziegler gave a ~~xxxxxx~~ minimized version of this

"The preparation [of the transcripts] was undertaken ~~by the~~ under the supervision of the Counsel's Office, specifically Mr. [Fred] Buzhardt...These transcripts were then relistened to by individuals in the Counsel's Office and then reviewed with the President ...(p.12)

Ziegler was then asked:

~~Ziegler has a cast-iron head atop a cast-iron face to work with his cast-iron gut that can keep anything down. There is a measure of him and what Nixon really did in what is pertinent to what Nixon did in his unembarrsed "answer" to a question pointing out a White House corruption of what Nixon said to give it exactly the opposite meaning:(p.23)~~

"Q. Ron, has anyone in the White House double-checked the part of the March 22 tape that was transcribed by the White House to determine whether the President said, 'Get off the cover-up line,' as the White House transcript shows, or "Get on with the cover-up plan," as the committee version shows."

Mr. Ziegler. I think they have—

Q. Who?

Ziegler never said "who. And he actually said "Get on with the cover-up plan" does not mean that at all:

"...what the President is doing here is not saying 'Get on with the cover-up.'..." (p.23)

It is ~~the~~ this withheld transcript of March 22 that Nixon's counsel, St. Clair, described as of "dubious relevance."(p.9)

The bribing of Hunt came up in this news conference when a reporter asked,"...how do you resolve the difference...between the President telling the people repeatedly that in his view paying hush-money ~~in~~ to Watergate defendants such as Hunt would be wrong and the transcripts showing repeatedly that he entertained the idea favorably and at one point sisd, 'Well, for Christ's sake get it,' and at another point said, 'well, yes, we'll go that route,' or something to that effect."

Ziegler made a non-response beginning with a falsehood,"Well, I think that is a subject that has been covered so extensively that I really have nothing to add to that. ...that the President did not order a payment of hush-money is something that will be shown to be the case." (p.22)

That the President said, "Well for Christs's sake get it" and Hunt was then given $75,000 via Ditman's mailbox is Nixon "did not order a payment of hush-money."

This press conference was the day after not the leaking but the official release

For the most part purchasers did little or no reading of these transcripts. They are ~~were~~ lengthy. The Bantam edition is ~~877~~ 877 pages long. They are in chronological sequence and undigested, which means that they must be read and reread for sense, thumbing back and forth or they remain largely incomprehensible. This discouraged reading. However, they looked nice on end tables, suggesting the owner kept up on current affairs. Making time-pressured sense of this mountain of words was too much for the daily press, which did its very good best to collate them. But the volume prevented completeness.

by the House committee of an installment of three dozen volumes of official evidence. By then Ziegler didn't bother to protest when Nixon was called a liar. Nor did he lose his temper over so invidious a reference to his hero, the President of the United States.

Nixon remained unimpeached but by then it was all a rear-guard action with occasional public-relations feints that were attacks that no longer had power or influence.

Only the unregenerate, the unthinking Nixon hardcore pretended there was any question about Nixon's personal involvement in these crimes. For the first time a majority of Americans were reflected in the polls as favoring his impeachment, ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ Before the House committee released correct versions of those of the tapes it had, a small percentage of the small percentage Nixon let the special prosecutor have, all that was available is Nixon's own versions. In them, aside from omissions and changes to eliminate the most incriminating, slight alterations, even in punctuation, made a vast difference. In reading rather than in hearing a complete reversal in sense is accomplished by using a question mark instead of an explanation point, as in the directive to pay Hunt off.

Despite all he did to alter his own transcripts, when Nixon had no real alternative to the effort he made in releasing them, he released a self-indictment as no other President had - ever. Here are a few examples. The citations are to the Bantam edition, the most widely distributed of the millions of copies that were sold. The reader is cautioned again to remember that Nixon (P) and ~~[illegible]~~ Haldeman (H) both knew (D) that every word was being captured and preserved on tape whereas others, like Dean and Ehrlichman (E) did not. Thus when Nixon - "P" - says "I don't know about anything else" in the first excerpt, perhaps he did not, which is improbable, and perhaps he said this so the tapes would make it appear he did not "know about anything else." The second excerpt, from the same tape, proves he lied. It says Nixon did know about Hunt's ITT work.

5) Following are excerpts from pp.

87, 113, 135, 143-9, 152, 154, 156-7, 160-1, 163-5, 170-2, 174-5, 177, 261-2, 276-7, 281, 292, 295, 305, 309-10, 322, 328-9, 333, 344-5, 376, 399-400, 403, 405, 413, 434-6, 452-3, 466, 495-6, 508-10, 516-7, 520-1, 525-8, 532-3, 618, 623, 625-6, 644, 647-9, 739, 767-8, 776, 787-91

The reader can judge withether this is "devil's advocacy" of just plain deviltry.

Guilt of many crimes is unhidden. Devil of his advocate, Nixon had, disclosed and discussed his knowledge of and his direct participation in the most serious crimes.

There are those who hold beliefs they imagine Nixon holds, whose belief is close to what he has said. They had their guy in the White House and it denied them dispassion. The preacher of their views just had to be innocent.

There are those who believe in authoritarianism. Nixon truly was one of theirs. They just didn't give a dman about fact or evidence or reason or proof or anything that was a truthful disclosure of the never-dreamed-of crimes and criminals Nixon took to the White House.

There are haters, racists who liked Nixon's catering to their prejudices.

And there are those who regard the President as some newfangled monarch, a man who can do no wrong.

For these there is no proof for they will neither see nor credit anything, not even what became a popular figure of speech among Nixon's Congressional defenders during the impeachment hearings, a "smoking gun," would be proof of the violence he had done to law, Constitution, any concept of honor and decency and to the country.

For others these selections are intended not to be complete but to give some comprehension of what went on in secret in Nixon's secret hideaways.

Those unwilling and those willing to believe may agree on the Nixonian defense, that all his incriminating words are "devil's advocacy." They will not agree on the meaning of the lawyer's phrase. One may take it literally, not as a figure of speech.